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A DISCOURSE OF AN Unconverted Man's Enmity, AGAINST GOD.

Preached to a Country Congregation, by *J. Howe*
And publish'd by one who wrote it from his Mouth.

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BRITISH

COLOS. I. 21.

And you that were ſometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

IT is a great and wonderful Context, whereof theſe words are a part, which the time will not allow me to look into; but preſently to fall on the conſideration of the words in themſelves; which briefly repreſent to us,

The wretched and horrid ſtate of men, yet unconverted, and not brought home to God.

The happy ſtate of thoſe that are reduced, and brought home to him.

The former in theſe words, *And you that were ſometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works.*

The latter in thoſe words, *Yet now hath he reconciled.*

I ſhall apply my Diſcourſe to the former part of the words, and thence obſerve;

That men, in their unconverted ſtate, are alienated from God, and enemies to him by their wicked works.

This I ſhall endeavour,

1. To explain, and ſhew you the meaning of it.

2. Evince, and let you ſee the truth of it.

3. Apply it.

1. For the meaning of it. 'Tis evident, that it is the unconverted ſtate of man that is here reflected upon, and referred unto. *You that were ſometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works.* They were ſo before they were turned to God. He writes to thoſe *Coloſſians*, as to *Converts*, to them that were *Saints* and *faithful Brethren in Chriſt*, Verſ. 2. to them that were now Believers in Chriſt, and Lovers of the Saints, *V.* 4. telling them, they ſometimes had been *enemies by wicked*

wicked works. Before converſion, they had as is elſewhere ſaid, *their underſtandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God*; walking, as *other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind*, Epheſ. 4. 18. compared with the preceding Verſe. This is the deplorable condition of the unconverted World. They are alienated from, and enemies to God, by wicked works.

We are to conſider, what this *alienation from God* doth import. It ſignifies, eſtrangement, unacquaintance with God; and that without any inclination towards him, or diſpoſition to ſeek his acquaintance. The word is emphatical, it ſignifies *people of another Country.* You were like people of another Country. Of ſuch a different Language, Manners, and Behaviour, they that are converted are to you, and you to them. You are eſtranged to their Speech, Cuſtoms, and Ways. All that is of God was ſtrange to you. Men in their unconverted ſtate are ſtrangers to God. Wicked men do not underſtand the

words of the Goſpel, *Joh.* 8. 43. What relates to the Kingdom of God the unconverted man diſlikes, *Job* 21. 14. *They ſay to God, depart from us, we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways. Man,* who was originally made for the ſervice of God, and communion with him, is now ſo degenerated, that he is become a meer ſtranger to him.

The next word to be taken notice of, is, *Enemies*, which may ſeem to add ſomewhat to the former word *alienated.* There is not only *no inclination* towards God; but there is a *diſinclination.* Not only *no affection*, but a *diſaffection.* The *carnal mind is enmity to God.* And the effects of this enmity are obvious. This alienation from God is voluntary, affected, and choſen. Men in their unconverted ſtate, are not only *ſtrangers* to God, but *enemies* againſt God, and that *in their minds.* A moſt fearful caſe, full of aſtoniſhment, that the very *mind of man*, the off-ſpring of God, the paternal mind, as an Heathen call'd him; that this moſt excellent part, or pow-

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er belonging to the nature of man, ſhould be poiſon'd with malignity, and envenom'd with enmity againſt the glorious ever-bleſſed God! The mind of man; his thinking power; the fountain of thoughts, ſhould be ſet againſt God, who gave him this *power to think!* Yet into this Reaſon muſt every mans unacquaintance with God be reſolv'd. They know not God, and converſe not with him, only becauſe they have no mind to it. That noble faculty in man, that reſembles the nature of God, is turn'd off from him, and ſet on vain things that cannot profit; as alſo upon wicked and impure things, that render them more unlike to God, and diſaffected to him.

By wicked works] which muſt have a double reference.

1. Former wicked works, as done by them.

2. Future wicked works, as reſolved on by them.

1. The former wicked works, which they have done, have more and more

habituated their Souls unto a ſtate of diſtance from God. The longer they live, the longer they ſin. And the longer they ſin, the more they are confirm'd in their enmity againſt God.

2. Future wicked works, as reſolv'd on to be done. They purpoſe to live as they have done, and give themſelves the ſame liberty in ſin as before, and will not know God, or be acquainted with him, leſt they ſhould be drawn off from their reſolv'd ſinful courſe. For the knowledge of God, and a courſe of ſin are inconſiſtent things, 1 *Cor.* 15. 34. *Awake to righteouſneſs and ſin not, for ſome have not the knowledge of God. This is the condemnation,* Joh. 3. 19. *that light is come into the world; but men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.* They hate the light, becauſe they will not have their courſe altered. They reſolve to do as they have done. And that light, which brings with it a tendency to the obeying of God, they cannot endure. But then, as this alienation of mind, and enmity

enmity are againſt the light that reveals God, they finally terminate on the bleſſed God himſelf. As God is the term of Reconciliation, ſo he is the term of this enmity and alienation. Wicked men look on God with enmity of mind under ſeveral notions;

1. As he claims to be their Owner. When he claims a principal propriety in them; when he inſiſts on his right in them, as their Creator, as having made them out of nothing. When God owns, or claims them as their Lord, that firſt ſignifies, he is their Proprietor, or one, to whom they belong. But they ſay, they are their own. If we have to do with God, we muſt quit claim to our ſelves, and look on God as our Owner. But this is fix'd in the hearts of men, we will be our own; we will not conſent to the claim which God makes to us. *Our tongues are our own*, Pſal. 12. 4. Wicked men might as well ſay the ſame thing of their whole ſelves, our bodies, ſtrength, time, parts, *&c.* are our own, and *who is Lord over us.*

If you conſider God under the notion of a Ruler, as well as an Owner. Why ſhould not God rule over, and govern his own? But this the ſpirit of man can by no means comport withall; tho' 'tis but reaſonable, that he who gave men their Beings, ſhould give them Laws; and that he who gave life, ſhould alſo give the rule of life. But this man, in his degenerate ſtate, will by no means admit of. There are two things conſiderable in the Will of God, which the mind of man cannot comply withall.

The Sovereignty, and the Holineſs of it.

1. The Sovereignty of God's Will. We muſt look on God's Will as abſolutely Sovereign. Man muſt look on God's Will to be above his Will; ſo as that man muſt croſs his own will, to comport with an higher will than his. But this apoſtatiz'd man will not do; and therefore he is at enmity with God; he will not ſubmit to the Will of God, as ſuperiour to his Will. And then

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2. There is the Holineſs of God's Will. His Law is a holy Law, and the renewed man therefore loves it. But becauſe 'tis holy, therefore the unregenerate man diſlikes it.

3. Laſtly, *God* is conſider'd under the notion of *our end, our laſt end*, as he is to be glorify'd, and enjoy'd by us. There is a diſaffection to God in the hearts of unregenerate men in this regard alſo. The ſpirit of man is oppoſite to living to the glory of God. Every one ſets up for himſelf. I will be my own end. It ſhall be the buſineſs of my whole life to pleaſe my ſelf. Therefore, when God is repreſented as our end, as in the 1 *Cor.* 10. 31. *Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* And as it is in the 2 *Cor.* 5. 15. *No man is to live to himſelf*, &c. The great deſign of our being delivered from the Law, (*viz.* as a curſing, condemning Law is) that we may *live to God*, Gal. 2. 19. *I am dead to the Law, that I might live to God.* This the unrenewed heart cannot com-

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port with. The laſt and great deſign of all our actions muſt terminate on God. Now *ſelf* is ſet up, as the great Idol, in oppoſition to *God*, all the world over; and the ſpirits of men grow by cuſtom more and more diſaffected to God in this reſpect.

Again, *God* would be owned by us for *our beſt good*. This ſhould be the ſenſe of our Souls towards him. So it was with the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. 73. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee*, &c. But ſays the unregenerate Soul, the World is better to me than God. And it is upon this account, that when Overtures are made of changing this ſtate, the unregenerate mind oppoſes it.

Thus have you this Doctrine explained, and opened. I come now in the

2d. Place, To evince the truth of this Doctrine, and that by two Heads of Arguments,

Partly from our ſelves, and partly from God.

1. From

1. From our ſelves. 'Tis an alienation and enmity of mind, that keeps men off from God, and Reconciliation with him, which will plainly appear,

1. If we conſider, that our minds are capable of knowing God. Such a thing is the mind of man, which was originally made for ſuch an exerciſe, as to be taken up principally with things relating to God. Our minds can apprehend what is meant by the nature of God, as a Being of uncreated Perfection, in whom all Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs do meet; who fills Heaven and Earth, and from everlaſting was God. Our minds tell us, that we have a capacity thus to conceive of God. 'Tis in the capacity of man's nature, to mind God, as well as to mind vanity; but doth it not. And whence doth this proceed, but from enmity, an alienation of the mind from God?

2. This appears in that men are wilfully ignorant of God, and are deſtitute of the knowledge of him out of choice; ignorant, and are willing to be

be ſo. This ſpeaks enmity, and alienation of mind more expreſly, and fully. That they are capable of knowing God, and yet are ignorant of him, leaves no other cauſe aſſignable. But their deſiring ſo to be, plainly aſſigns this cauſe, *Rom.* 1. 28. *They liked not to retain God in their knowledge.* 'Tis not grateful to them, *Job* 21. 14. *We deſire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Men are ignorant willingly of that God, who made the world, and all things therein, 2 *Pet.* 3. 5. *For this they are willingly ignorant*, &c. They will not know God, though his *viſible Works* ſhew his *inviſible Power, and Godhead*, Rom. 1. 19, 20. Now this can ſignify nothing but alienation and enmity of mind. Men are willing and induſtrious to know other things, and labour after the knowledge of them; but they decline the knowledge of God, and his ways, being alienated from God, *through the blindneſs of their hearts*, Epheſ. 4. 18. This heart-blindneſs is choſen, and voluntary blindneſs, ſignifies their having

ving no mind or will to things of that nature.

But now the voluntarineſs of this ignorance of God, and the enmity that is, conſequently, in it, appears evidently in two ſorts of perſons.

1. In many that are of the more knowing and inquiſitive ſort, who do all they can to make themſelves *notional Atheiſts*; to blot, or raſe the notion of God out of their minds. Of them I ſhall ſay little *here*. They do their utmoſt, but in vain. It will ſtick as cloſe to them as their *thinking Power*. But their *attempt* ſhews their *enmity*. For they are content to admit the groſſeſt Abſurdities into their minds, rather than permit that notion to remain unmoleſted there. Rather imagine ſuch a curious frame of things, as this World is, to have come by chance, than that it had a wiſe, juſt, holy, as well as powerful, Maker. They would count it an abſurdity, even unto madneſs, to think the exquiſite picture of a Man, or a Tree, to have happened by chance; and can allow

allow themſelves to be ſo abſurd, as to think a Man himſelf, or a Tree, to be caſual Productions. Is not this the height of enmity!

2. In the unthinking generality; of whom, yet unconverted out of the ſtate of Apoſtacy, 'tis ſaid, *they are fools*, as is the uſual Language of Scripture, concerning wicked, or unconverted men; and that ſuch fools, tho' they never offer at ſaying in their minds, much leſs with their mouths; *yet they ſay in their hearts, no God*; i.e. not *there is none*; for there is no [is] in the Hebrew Text. The words may rather go in the *Optative* form, than the *Indicative*, *O that there were none!* The notion is let alone, while it reaches not their hearts. If it do, they only wiſh it were otherwiſe. This ſpeaks their enmity the more; for the notion lies a continual teſtimony againſt the bent of their hearts, and conſtant practice; that, while they own a God, they never fear, nor love him accordingly. And they groſly miſrepreſent him, ſometimes as all made

made up of Mercy, without Juſtice, or Holineſs; and ſo think they need no Reconciliation to him; he and they are well agreed already. Sometimes think of him, as mercileſs, and irreconcilable; and therefore, never look after being reconciled to him.

3. It appears hence, that men do ſo ſeldom think of God, when as a thought of God may be as ſoon thought as any other, and would coſt us as little. Why not as well on God, as upon any of thoſe vanities, about which they are commonly employ'd? 'Tis a wonderful thing to conſider, how man is capable of forming a thought! how a thought ariſes in our minds! And how ſad is it to conſider, that tho' God hath given to man a thinking power, yet they will not think of him! God hath given to man a mind that can think, and think on him, as well as on any thing elſe. My body cannot think, if my mind and ſpirit is gone: Though God gave man the power of thought; yet men will not uſe or employ their thoughts,

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otherwiſe than about vain or forbidden things. God forms the Spirit of man within him; hath put an immortal Spirit into him, whence a ſpring of thoughts might aſcend Heaven-wards. When we have thouſands of Objects to chooſe of, we think of any thing rather than God! And not only turn this way, or that, beſides him; but tend continually downwards in oppoſition to him. Yea, men cannot endure to be put in mind of God. The ſerious mention of his Name is diſtaſtful. Whence can this proceed, that a thought of God caſt in, is thrown out, as Fire from one's Boſom; whence is it, but from the enmity of mind, that is in man againſt God?

4. It further appears hence, That men are ſo little concern'd about the Favour of God. Whomſoever we love, we naturally value their love. But whether God be a Friend, or an Enemy, it is all one to the unrenewed Soul, if there be no ſenſible effects of his diſpleaſure. The men of this World only value its Favours. The Favour

of

of God they value not. Whereas *in his Favour is Life*, in the account of holy and good men, *Pſal.* 30. 5. yea, they judge *his loving-kindneſs is better than life* without it, *Pſal.* 63. 3. When men ſhall go from day to day without conſidering, whether God hath a Favour for them, or not; whether they are accepted, or not; whether they have found grace in his eyes, or not, *&c.* What doth this declare, but an enmity of mind, and alienation from God? If men had true love for God, it could not be, but they would greatly value his love.

5 That men do ſo little converſe, and walk with God, doth ſpeak a fixed alienation of mind, and enmity againſt God. Walking with God includes knowing, and minding him; but it adds all other motions of Soul towards him, together with continuance, and approving our ſelves to him therein. Now agreement is required to walking with God, *Amos* 3. 3. *Can two walk together, unleſs they be agreed?* Hoſ. 3. 3. Men walk not with God, becauſe they are not come to an agreement with

him. God's agreement with us, and ours with him, is, that we may walk together. If we walk not with God, it is becauſe there is no agreement, and what doth that import, but an alienation of mind from God. Says God, I would not have you live in the World at ſo great a diſtance from me, I would walk with you, and have you walk with me; and for this end, I would come to an agreement with you. But Sinners will not come to any agreement with God; and thence it comes to paſs, that they walk not with God; they begin the day without God, walk all the day long without God, lye down at night without God; and the reaſon is, becauſe there is no agreement; and that denotes enmity. Eſpecially conſidering,

6. That daily converſe with God would coſt us nothing. To have any man's thoughts full of Heaven, and full of holy fear and reverence of God, &c. (which is included in walking with God) what inconvenience is in this? what buſineſs will this hinder?

der? when a man goes about his ordinary affairs, will it do any hurt to take God with him? No buſineſs will go on the worſe for it, it will not detract from the ſucceſs of our affairs, 1 *Cor.* 7. 24. *Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God.* Let your ſtate be what it will, there can be no buſineſs in this World, but what you may do with God, as well as without God, and much better.

7. Which makes the matter yet plainer. How uncomfortably do men live in this World, by reaſon of their diſtance from God, and unacquaintedneſs with him, *Job* 35. 10. *But no one ſaith, where is God my maker, who giveth Songs in the night.* They chooſe rather to groan under their Burdens alone, than cry to God their maker, as at the 9th Verſe of that Chapter. When men will endure the greateſt extremity, rather than apply themſelves to God; what doth this reſolve into, but enmity againſt God?

8. That men do ſo univerſally diſobey God beſpeaks alienation and en-

mity of mind. As Obedienc proceeds from Love; ſo Diſobedience proceeds from Enmity. And for this I ſhall only inſtance in two great Precepts, wherein the Mind and Will of God is expreſt, which I mention, and inſiſt upon (tho' briefly) as things that concern the conſtant and daily practice of every Chriſtian.

1. A courſe of Prayer to God in ſecret.

2. And having our Converſation in Heaven. How expreſs are both theſe Precepts in the ſame Chapter; the former, *Matth.* 6. 6. the latter, *verſ.* 19, 20, 21. Now conſider, whether our diſobedience to theſe two Precepts do not diſcover great enmity in our Hearts againſt God? What, to refuſe to pray, and pour out our Souls to him in ſecret? To refuſe placing our Treaſure, and our Hearts in Heaven, what doth this ſignify, but averſion, and a diſaffected Heart?

Let us conſider each of them ſeverally and apart by it ſelf.

We are a Chriſtian Aſſembly: How ſhould it ſtartle us to be (any of us) convicted

convicted of enmity againſt God, under the Chriſtian Name, in two, ſo plain caſes?

1. For Prayer, 'tis a charge laid upon all perſons, conſider'd in their ſingle and perſonal capacity, *Matth. 6. 6. But thou when thou prayeſt, enter into thy Cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret.* I fear, that moſt of them, who bear the Chriſtian Name, carry the matter ſo, as if there were no ſuch place in the *Bible*. When the mind and will of God is made known to us by his Son, who came out of his Boſom, that he will be ſought unto; and that not only publickly, but ſecretly, and daily: that as we are taught by our Lord himſelf, to pray for our daily Bread, and the forgiveneſs of our daily treſpaſſes; we are alſo to *pray in ſecret to him that ſees in ſecret.* Can ſuch commands be conſtantly neglected and diſobey'd, and not ſignify the contrary bent of our will, eſpecially when we conſider, that it is enjoyned us for our own good? It

would be profane to ſay, what profit is it to us to call upon the Almighty? But it is moſt juſtly to be ſaid, what profit is it to the Almighty that we call upon him? It is honourable to him, but very profitable to our ſelves. If we know not how to pray in a corner; confeſſing our ſins, and ſupplicating for mercy; we cannot but live miſerable lives. When therefore this is not done, whence is it, but from an enmity of mind? To a Friend we can unboſom our ſelves; not to an Enemy.

I might alſo enlarge upon Family Prayer. But if Cloſet Prayer were ſeriouſly minded, you that have Families would not dare to neglect Prayer with them too. But if either be perform'd with coldneſs, and indifferency, it makes the matter worſe, or more plainly bad; and ſhews, it is not love, or any lively affection that puts you upon praying, but a frightened Conſcience only. And a miſerably miſtaken, deluded one, that makes you think, the God you pray to, will be

mock'd

mock'd or trifl'd with, or that cannot perceive, whether your Heart be with him, or againſt him. And ſo inſtead of worſhipping him, or giving him honour in that performance, you reproach and affront him. And all this while, how vaſtly doth the temper of your mind diſagree with the mind of God. I would, ſaith the bleſſed God, have a courſe of Prayer run through the whole courſe of your lives; and all this that your Hearts may be lifted up from Earth to Heaven; that your Hearts may be in Heaven every day, according to *Mat.*6.19. *Lay not up for your ſelves treaſures on Earth; but treaſures in Heaven*, &c. *Where your treaſure is, there will your hearts be alſo.* And ſo we are led to the other Precept mentioned before.

2. As to a Heavenly Converſation, God would not have reaſonable Creatures, who have intelligent ſpirits about them, to grovel and crawl like Worms in the Duſt of this lower World, as if they had no nobler ſort of Objects to converſe with, than the things of

this Earth; nothing fitter for the contemplation, exerciſe, and enjoyment of an immortal mind. The Saints are finally deſign'd for *an inheritance in light*, Coloſ. 1. 12. and their thoughts and affections ought to be there before hand; that they may become *meet for that inheritance.* Will it do a man any harm to have frequent forethoughts of the everlaſting joy, purity, and bliſs of the heavenly ſtate! How joyous and pleaſant muſt it be! And why are we called Chriſtians, if he, who is our Lord, and Teacher, revealing his mind to us, and expreſly charging us, to *ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God*, to *ſet our affections on the things above*, &c. ſhall not be regarded? Why is not Heaven every day in our thoughts? Why will we loſe the pleaſure of an heavenly life, and exchange it for earthly care, and trouble, or vanity, at the beſt? Why is it? no other reaſon can be given, but only an alienation of our minds from God.

9. Another Argument to prove this alienation, and enmity againſt God; is, the unſucceſsfulneſs of the Goſpel, which can be reſolvable into nothing elſe, but ſuch an enmity. The deſign of the Goſpel is to bring us into an Union with the Son of God, and to believe on him whom the Father hath ſent. Chriſt ſeeks to gather in Souls to God; but they will not be gathered. This is matter of fearful conſideration, that when God is calling after men by his own Son, that there be ſo few that will come to him. How few are there that ſay, give me Chriſt, or I am loſt? None can reconcile me to God but Chriſt? You are daily beſought in Chriſt's ſtead to be reconciled, 2 *Cor.* 5. 20. but in vain! What doth this ſignify, but obſtinate, invincible enmity?

2. Another head of Arguments may be taken from ſeveral conſiderations that we may have of God in this matter, whence it will appear, that nothing but enmity on our parts keeps us at that diſtance from God, as we generally

generally are at. And conſider to that purpoſe;

1. That God is the God of all Grace, the fountain of Goodneſs, the element of Love. Why are men at that diſtance from him, who is Goodneſs, and Grace, and Love it ſelf? The reaſon is not on God's part, 1 *Joh.* 4. 16. *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* What can our ſo great diſtance from this God ſignify! from the moſt perfect, the moſt excellent goodneſs! but the moſt horrid kind, and the higheſt pitch of enmity! Did men apprehend this, what frightful monſters would they appear to themſelves! This is not only a plain, but a terrible declaration of a moſt unaccountable enmity on our part.

2. God is ſtill pleaſed to continue our Race on Earth; a ſucceſſion of men in this World, from age to age, made after his own Image, with minds, and ſpirits that are intelligent, and immortal, which declares a ſtrong propenſion in God towards ſuch a ſort of

of creatures; the inhabitants of this lower World, tho' degenerated, and fall'n from him. Notwithſtanding all their neglect of him in former ages; yet new generations of men ſtill ſpring up, capable of knowing, and ſerving him, *Prov.* 8. 31. In the foreſeen heighth of man's enmity, this was the ſteady bent of his mind towards them, to *rejoyce in the habitable parts of this earth*, and to *have his delights with the ſons of men.* Thus alſo in the 2 *Chron.* 6. 18. do we find *Solomon* in a rapture of admiration on this account: *But will God in every deed dwell with men on earth*, &c! And the Pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* 68. 18. That *gifts are given to the rebellious* (the moſt inſolent of enemies) *that the Lord God might dwell among them.* How admirable and unconceivable a wonder is this! *The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and will he yet dwell with men on earth!* And we yet find, notwithſtanding God's great condeſcenſion, that there is ſtill a diſtance. Whence can this be, but from man's averſion, and enmity of mind againſt God?

God? Thus are men ſtill requiting God evil for his goodneſs. God will dwell with men on Earth, but men will not dwell with him, nor admit of his dwelling with them. They ſay to him, *depart from us*, Job 21. 14. 'Tis thus from age to age, and generation to generation, which ſhews God's goodneſs on his part, and the enmity on man's part. See to this purpoſe, *Pſalm* 14. and 53. the beginning of each.

3. Conſider the forbearance of God towards you, while you are continually at mercy. With what patience doth he ſpare you, though your own hearts muſt tell you, that you are offending creatures, and whom he can deſtroy in a moment! He ſpares you that neglect him. *He is not willing that you ſhould periſh; but come to the knowledge of the truth, that you may be ſaved*; by which he calls, and leads you to repentance, *Rom.* 2. 4. On God's part here is a *kind intention*; but on man's part nothing but *perſevering enmity*.

4. Con-

4. Conſider God's large and wonderful bounty towards the Children of men in this World, and the deſign of it, *Acts* 17. 25, 26. *He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might ſeek after him*, Pſal. 68. 19. *He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He gives us all things richly to enjoy.* Act. 14. 17. *God leaves not himſelf without witneſs, that he doth men good.* He gives men Rain from Heaven, when they want it, and, when unſeaſonable, he with-holds it. 'Tis a great thing to underſtand *the loving-kindneſs of the Lord*, Pſal. 107. 42. *his wonderfull works towards the children of men*; to underſtand our Mercies and Comforts, and what their meaning, and deſign is. By Mercies to our outward man, God deſigns to draw our hearts and minds to himſelf. Mercies are beſtowed on them that have the power of thought, to conſider the end of all God's Mercies. 'Tis beſpeaking, and ſeeking to win our hearts to himſelf, *Hoſ.* 11. 4. 'Tis *drawing us with thoſe cords of a man, with bands of love*;

love; which plainly ſhews, what the caſe requires; that the minds and hearts of men are very averſe, and alienated from him, and therefore need ſuch drawing.

5. And that which is more than all the reſt, is God's ſending his Son into the World, to procure terms of peace for us, and then to treat with us thereupon; and that *in him he is reconciling the world to himſelf*, 2 Cor. 5. 19. Doth not Reconciliation ſuppoſe enmity, as here, and in the Text. *You that were enemies in your minds —— yet hath he reconciled.* As we have noted, that on our parts, our withſtanding, and too commonly fruſtrating his Overtures, ſpeaks enmity, and obſtinacy therein; ſo on his part, thoſe Overtures themſelves ſpeak it too. Here is the greateſt kindneſs and good-will, on God's part, that can be conceiv'd. But it ſuppoſes, what we are evincing, ill-will in us. *Chriſt came to ſeek and ſave that which was loſt.* What a loſt ſtate was our ſtate! What to be engaged in a War againſt

againſt him that made us! *Wo to him that ſtrives with his Maker*, Iſa. 45. 9. Fall'n man is little apprehenſive of it now. If we continue unreconciled to the laſt, at death it will be underſtood what a loſt ſtate we are in. Upon this account it will then appear; but this was our ſtate before, when it appeared not. In this ſtate Chriſt pitied us, when we had no pity for our ſelves. Chriſt came not into the World to ſave men only at the hour of their death from Hell; but to raiſe up to himſelf a willing people, that may ſerve and glorify God in their life on Earth. He is for this purpoſe intent on this reconciling deſign. And how earneſt, how alluring were his Solicitations in the days of his Fleſh! *Come to me all ye that are weary—— He that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out.* How pathetical his lamentations for the unreconcilable! *O that thou hadſt known the things belonging to thy peace——* And his bloud was ſhed at laſt, as the bloud of Propitiation, of a reconciling Sacrifice, firſt,

firſt, to reconcile God's Juſtice to us; but thereupon alſo, as in this Context, *Having made peace by the bloud of his croſs*, verſ. 20. to vanquiſh our enmity, *to reconcile us who were enemies in our minds* — verſ. 21, 22.

6. Conſider Chriſt ſending, and continuing from Age to Age the Goſpel in the World; the deſign whereof may be underſtood by the manifeſt import and ſubſtance of it, and by the titles given to it. As it reveals Chriſt, the Mediator, the Peace-maker, in his Perſon, Natures, Offices, Acts, Sufferings, and Performances. As it contains the great commands of *Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, with the promiſes of Pardon and Eternal Life, with whatſoever is requiſit to our preſent good ſtate Godward, and our final bleſſedneſs in him. As alſo the various enforcements of ſuch Precepts, and confirmations of ſuch Promiſes, with copious Explications of the one and the other.

And

And as it is called, the *Miniſtry of Reconciliation*, 2 Cor. 5. 18. *The word wherein Peace is preached by Jeſus Chriſt*, Act. 10. 36. *The Goſpel of peace, and of glad tidings*, Rom. 10. 15. as that very word *Goſpel* ſignifies.

This Goſpel was, in its clearer manifeſtation, at the fulneſs of time, introduc'd with great magnificence, and ſolemnity into the world, as the Law had been, by the Miniſtry of Angels. When the *Sun of Righteouſneſs, the light of the world* was ariſing, and dawning upon it; then did a multitude of the Heavenly Hoſt appear, praiſing God, and ſaying, *Glory to God in the higheſt, peace on earth, and good-will towards men*, Luk. 2. 13, 14.

But this Goſpel is not a more expreſs declaration of God's good-will towards men; than their deportment under it, their continuing to live, as without God in the world, is of their ill-will, diſaffection, and enmity againſt God.

7. And laſtly, The ſtrivings of the Spirit in the Hearts of Miniſters preach-

ing the Goſpel, and with the Souls of men to whom it is preached, ſhew, that there is a mighty enmity to be overcome.

1. God's giving forth his Spirit to Miniſters, enabling them to ſtrive with Sinners, to bring them to Chriſt; *according to the working of that power, which works in them mightily*, Coloſ. 1. *ult.* What need of ſuch ſtriving, but that there is a great enmity in the minds of People to be conquered and overcome? Sometimes we read of Miniſters of the Goſpel weeping over Souls, who, for their too intent *minding of earthly things, are called enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt*, Phil. 3. 18. Sometimes they are ready to breath out their own Souls towards them, among whom they labour, 1 *Theſſ.* 2. 8. Sometimes repreſented, as *travelling in birth* with them that are committed to their charge, *Gal.* 4. 19. There are Miniſters, whoſe Hearts are in pangs and agonies for the Souls of Sinners, when the things of God are too apparently neglected, and not regard-

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ed by them; and when they ſee *deſtruction from the Almighty is not a terror to them*; and while they viſibly take *the way that takes hold of Hell, and leads down to the chambers of death.* They would, if poſſible, *ſave them with fear*, and pluck *them*, as firebrands, out of the fire; the fire of their own luſts, and fervent enmity againſt God and Godlineſs, and ſave them from his flaming wrath. Is all this unneceſſary, and what makes it neceſſary, but that there is a counterſtriving, an enmity working in the Hearts of men, againſt the Spirits ſtriving in the Miniſtry, to be overcome?

2. The Spirit alſo ſtrives immediately with the Souls of Sinners, and pleads with them, ſometimes, as a Spirit of conviction, illumination, fear and dread; ſometimes, as a Spirit of Grace, woing, and beſeeching; and when his motions are not complied with, there are complaints of mens grieving, vexing, quenching, reſiſting the Spirit, *Acts* 7. 51. Which reſiſtance implies continual ſtriving. No

ſtriving, but doth ſuppoſe an obſtruction and difficulty to be ſtriven withall. There could be no reſiſting, if there were not counter-ſtriving. And hereby *deſpite is done to the Spirit of Grace.* O fearful aggravation! that ſuch a Spirit is ſtriven againſt! 'Tis *the Spirit of Grace*, *Love* and *Goodneſs*, the Spirit of *all Kindneſs*, *Sweetneſs* and *Benignity*, which a wicked man doth deſpite unto, *Heb.* 10. 29. How vile, and horrid a thing, to requite *Grace*, *Love*, and *Sweetneſs* with *Spite!* As if the Sinner ſhould ſay, Thou wouldeſt turn me to God; but I will not be turned! The bleſſed God ſays, *Turn at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit unto you*, Prov. 1. 23. There are preventive inſinuations, upon which, if we eſſay to turn, plentiful effuſions of the Spirit may be hoped to enſue. For he is the Spirit of Grace. When we draw back, and reſiſt, or ſlight thoſe foregoing good motions of that Holy Spirit, this is deſpiting him. And doth not this import enmity in an high degree? That the Spirit needs

ſtrive

ſtrive ſo much, that it may be overcome; as with ſome, *at his own pleaſure*, he doth; with others, in juſt diſpleaſure, he ſtrives no more, and ſo it is never overcome.

We come now to the Application. Wherein the Subject would admit, and require a very abundant enlargement, if we were not within neceſſary limits.

Two things I ſhall take notice of, as very neceſſary to be remark'd, and moſt amazingly ſtrange and wonderfull, by way of Introduction to ſome further Uſe.

1. That ever the Spirit of man, a reaſonable, intelligent Being, God's own Off-ſpring; and whereto he is not only a *Maker*, but a *Parent*, ſtyl'd the *Father of Spirits*, ſhould be degenerated into ſo horrid, ſo unnatural a Monſter! What! to be an *hater of God!* The moſt excellent, and all-comprehending Good! and thy own Father! *Hear, O Heavens — and Earth, ſaith the Lord, I have nouriſhed, and brought up children, and they have rebelled a-*

gainſt me, Iſa. 1. 2. Be aſtoniſh'd, O ye Heavens at this! and be horribly afraid! be ye very deſolate! As if all the bleſſed inhabitants of that upper World ſhould rather forſake their glorious Manſions, leave Heaven empty, and run back into their original nothing, than endure ſuch a ſight! An *intelligent* Spirit, *hating God* is the moſt frightful prodigy in univerſal Nature! If all mens Limbs were diſtorted, and their whole outer-man transformed into the moſt hideous ſhapes, 'twere a trifle, in compariſon with this deformity of thy Soul.

2. That it ſhould be thus, and they never regret, nor perceive it! What ſelf-loathing Creatures wou'd men be, could they ſee themſelves! ſo as never to endure themſelves, while they find they do not love God! But men are generally well pleas'd with themſelves for all this. Though the caſe is ſo plain, they will not ſee it. When all the mention'd indications ſhew it, they never charge or ſuſpect themſelves of ſuch a thing as this enmity

againſt

againſt God! God charges them, and doth he not know them? The Pagan World that they are *God-haters*, Rom. 1. 30. even with an *helliſh hatred*, as the word there ſignifies. They that profeſs his Name are apt to admit this true of the *Gentiles*; but do we think our Lord Jeſus did injuriouſly accuſe the *Jews* too, that *they had both ſeen, and hated him, and his Father*? Joh. 15. 24. How remote was it from a *Jew*, who boaſted themſelves God's peculiar people, to think himſelf an hater of God! And what were they, of whom he ſays, by the Prophet? *loathed them; and their Soul abhorred me*, (which is preſuppoſed) *Zech.* 11. 8. and moſt juſtly, for can there be a more loathſome thing than to abhor Goodneſs it ſelf! What the moſt *perfect Benignity*! And thoſe *Cretians* had receiv'd the *Chriſtian Faith*, whom the *Apoſtle* exhorts *Titus* to rebuke *ſharply*, that they might be *ſound in it*; and of whom he ſays, that *profeſſing to know God, in works they denied him, being abominable*,

Θεοστυγεῖς.

ble, Tit. 1. 16. Hence is our labour loſt in beſeeching men to be reconciled to God, while they own no enmity.

Since this matter is ſo evident, that this is the temper of the unconverted World Godward, that they are *alienated from him, and enemies in their minds* toward him, by wicked works: It is then beyond all expreſſion ſtrange, that they never obſerve it in themſelves; (as the Toad is not offended, at its own poiſonous nature) and are hereupon apt to think that God obſerves it not, nor is diſpleaſed with them for it.

It is ſtrange they ſhould not obſerve it in themſelves, upon ſo manifold evidence. Do but recount with your ſelves, and run over the ſeveral heads of evidence that have been given. Can you deny you have minds capable of knowing God? Cannot you conceive of Wiſdom, Power, Goodneſs, Truth, Juſtice, Holineſs, and that theſe may be, either more manifeſt, or in more excellent degrees, even among Creatures, in ſome Creatures more than

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in others; but *that Being*, in which they are in higheſt, and moſt abſolute perfection, muſt be God? Can you deny that you have lived in great ignorance of God much of your time? that your ignorance was voluntary, having ſuch means of knowing him, as you have had? That you have uſually been thoughtleſs and unmindfull of him in your ordinary courſe? That the thoughts of him have been ungratefull, and very little welcome, or pleaſant to you? That you have had little converſe with him, little truſt, reverence, delight, or expectation plac'd on him as the object? That you have not been wont to concern him in your affairs, to conſult him, to deſire his concurrence? That you have not thought of approving your ſelf to him in your deſigns and actions, but lived as *without him in the world*? That you have not deſigned the pleaſing, or obeying of him in the courſe of your converſation? That the Goſpel under which you have lived, hath had little effect upon you, to alter the tem-

per

per of your Spirits towards him? That, if his Spirit hath ſometimes awakened you, raiſed ſome fear, or ſome deſires now and then in your Souls, you have ſuppreſt, and ſtifled, and ſtriven againſt ſuch motions? Do not theſe things together diſcover an enmity againſt God, and the ways of God? And is it not ſtrange you cannot ſee this? and perceive a diſaffection to God by all this in your ſelves? What is ſo near a man, as himſelf? Have you not in you a reflecting power? *Know ye not your own ſelves*, as the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* 13. 5. Yea, generally, men never find fault with themſelves, upon any ſuch account! and, conſequently, think themſelves in ſuch reſpects very innocent in the ſight of God, and think he finds no fault with them.

Now theſe two things being premiſed, will make way for the following Uſes. We infer therefore,

1. That whereas it ſo evidently appears, that men are at enmity with God, it cannot but be conſequent, that

that God is not well pleaſed with them.

No one is well pleaſed to have another hate him. God diſcerns that in the inward temper of mens minds, wherewith he is not well pleaſed, *viz.* this alienation of mind from him, this wicked enmity that is ſo generally found in them. They are wont to make light of ſecret, internal ſin. The ill poſture of their minds they think an harmleſs innocent thing. But this he remonſtrates againſt, takes notice of with diſlike and diſpleaſure; and is counterworking this ſpirit of enmity, not only by his word, but by his ſpirit of love and power. Though he doth not teſtify his diſpleaſure by flames and thunderbolts; yet he obſerves, and approves not the courſe and current of their thoughts and affections; though he permit them, ſometimes without ſenſible rebuke, to run on long in their contempt of him; yet he declares it to be wickedneſs. *The wicked have not God in all their thoughts*, Pſal. 10. 4. He expoſtulates

about

about it; *Wherefore do the wicked contemn God*, verſ. 13. threatens them with Hell for their forgetting him, *Pſal.* 9. 17. yet Sinners are apt to conclude, that God doth not ſee, or diſallow any thing of that kind, *Pſal.* 94. 7. How unapt are they to admit any conviction of Heart-wickedneſs! Tho' 'tis more than intimated to be deſtructive, *Jer.* 4. 14. *Waſh thine heart from wickedneſs, that thou mayeſt be ſaved*; q. d. thou art loſt if thy Heart be not purged. Yea, when it is ſo plain in it ſelf, that enmity againſt God, which hath its ſeat in the Heart, makes a mans Soul a very Hell! yet they ſeem to think themſelves very innocent Creatures, when they are as much devilliz'd, as a mind dwelling in Fleſh can be! This is the common practical error and miſtake men lie under, that they think God takes notice of no evil in them, but what other men can obſerve, and reproach them for. But he knows the inward bent and inclination of their minds, and Spirits. Why elſe is he

called,

called, the *heart-ſearching God?* And knows that this is the principal, and moſt horrid wickedneſs that is to be found among the children of men, an alienated mind from God; and the root of all the reſt. The fountain of wickedneſs is within a man. *Simon Magus*'s wickedneſs lay in his thought. 'Tis ſaid to him, *Repent of this thy wickedneſs, and pray the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee*, Act. 8. 22. And when the Prophet exhorts (as before) *Jer.* 4. 14. *to waſh the heart from wickedneſs*, he adds, *how long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee.* And our Saviour tells us, *Out of the heart*, firſt, *proceed evil thoughts*, and then all the other wickedneſſes after mentioned, *murthers*, *adulteries*, &c. *Matth.* 15. 19. And that enmity and alienation of mind that turns off the whole current of a man's thoughts from God, is the original evil, and, by conſequence, lets them looſe to every thing elſe that offends him, and ruins themſelves. Yet when their very Hearts are ſuch an Hell of wickedneſs

edneſs (as what is more helliſh than enmity againſt God?) they are, notwithſtanding, wont to ſay, they have good Hearts.

2. Hence ſee the abſolute neceſſity of Regeneration. A Doctrine, at which moſt men do wonder; which our Saviour intimates, when he ſays, *Joh.* 3. 7. *Marvel not* at it, *viz.* that *I ſaid, you muſt be born again.* But who may not now apprehend a neceſſity of being regenerate? What will become of thee, if thou dieſt with ſuch a diſaffected mind Godward? Do but ſuppoſe your Soul going out of the Body in this temper! full of diſaffection towards the ever-bleſſed God, before whoſe bright Glory, and flaming Majeſty (to thee *a conſuming fire*) thou muſt now appear: tho' moſt unwilling, and as full of horrour, and amazing dread! How will *thine heart* then *meditate terrour!* and ſay within thee, "This is the God I could ne-"ver love! whom I would never "know! To whom I was always a "willing ſtranger! whoſe admirable

Grace

Grace never allur'd or won my Heart! who in a day of Grace, that is now over with me, offered me free pardon, and reconciliation; but I was never at leiſure to regard it. *The love of this world*, which I might have known to be *enmity againſt God*, had otherwiſe engag'd me. It hath been the conſtant language of my Heart to him, *Depart from me, I deſire not the knowledge of thy ways*; I muſt now hear fromhim, that juſt and terrible voice, even by the mouth of the only Redeemer and Saviour of Sinners, *Depart from me, I knew thee not.* And into how horrid Society muſt I now go! *The things that eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard*, more glorious things than *ever enter'd into the heart*, are all *prepared for lovers of God.* And for whom can everlaſting *Fire be prepared but for the Devil and his Angels*, and ſuch other accurſed *God-haters*, as I have been! *Matt.* 25. 41.

Recollect your ſelves; conſider the preſent poſture, and temper of your Souls; and what your way and courſe

courſe is: You care not to come nigh to God now, but love to live at a diſtance from him, through enmity againſt him; from whence proceeds your departing from him, and ſaying to him, *depart from us?* But another day you will have enough of departing from God. A wicked man's life is nothing elſe but a continual forſaking of God, or departing from him. I appeal to your own hearts concerning the juſtice of that mentioned Repartee, *They ſay now to God, depart from us*, Job 21.14. And God will then ſay to them, *depart from me*, Matth. 25.41. That man's Soul muſt thus periſh, that lives and dies at enmity with God. Regeneration ſlays this enmity; and implants in the Soul *Divine Love*. Therefore we muſt be regenerate, or we *cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, Joh. 3.3,5. A man muſt have a new Heart, and a new Spirit created in him, in which Heart and Spirit the *Love of God* is the reigning principle. And therefore I repeat to you, *the things, which eye hath not*

ſeen ——

ſeen —— and *a crown of life*, are *prepared*, and *promiſed to them that love him*, 1 Cor. 2. 9. Jam. 1. 12. You may your ſelves collect the reſt.

3. Hence take notice of the Seat and Subject of this Regeneration and Change. It is the *mind of man.* For *you were enemies in your minds by wicked works. We are to be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds*, Epheſ. 4. 23. To be *transformed, by the renewing of our minds*, &c. *Rom.* 12. 2. You that have not conſidered what Regeneration is, I tell you, 'tis to have your minds altered, and changed. That whereas you did not mind God, or Chriſt, your minds being changed, you ſavour, and delight in the things of God, *Rom.* 8. 5, 7. *They that are after the fleſh, ſavour the things of the fleſh. The carnal mind is enmity againſt God.* It is the mind, therefore, not as ſpeculative meerly; but as practical, and active, that muſt be renewed. Enquire, therefore, what change do you find in your minds? Are you in mind and ſpirit more holy, ſpiritual and ſe-

rious? And are your minds more delightfully taken up with the things of God than formerly? Till your minds are thus changed, they cannot be towards God; but will be perpetually full of enmity againſt God. You will only mind earthly things, *Phil.* 3. 19, 20. with the neglect of God, and Heaven, and heavenly things. If ever the Goſpel doth us good, it muſt be by the change of our minds.

4. And in the laſt place. Hence underſtand the abſolute neceſſity of Reconciliation with God; becauſe you have been alienated, and enemies againſt him by wicked works. Regeneration cures in part your enmity; but makes no atonement for your guilt in having been enemies. For this you need a Reconciler, that could ſatisfy for you. What will become of the man that is not reconciled to God? If you be God's Enemy, can he be your Friend? And if God be your Enemy, he is the moſt terrible Enemy. How can we lie down in peace in an unreconciled ſtate? or without knowing,

knowing, whether we are reconciled, or not? Let not the Sun go down this day, and leave you at enmity with God. If you have fallen out with a man, the *Sun is not to go down on your wrath.* And is your enmity againſt God a juſter, or more tolerable thing? O let not the Sun go down before you have made your peace.

And for your encouragement, conſider, that it is the Office of the Son of God to reconcile you to him. He is the Reconciler, the Peace-maker, the maker up of Breaches between God and Man. He is, if you reſiſt not, ready, by his Spirit, to remove the enmity that lies in your minds againſt God; and, by his bloud, he cauſes Divine Juſtice to be at Peace with you. If you find the former effect, that aſſures you of the latter. Bleſs God that he hath provided, and given you notice of ſuch a Reconciler, 2 *Cor.* 5. 19. *God was in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf.* Bleſs God that he hath ſent and ſettled one among you on this errand, *to beſeech*

you to be reconciled to God, verſ. 20. *Bleſſed is the man, whoſe iniquities are forgiven*; and bleſſed is the man who can ſay, I was once an enemy, but now am I reconciled; formerly I ſaw no need of Chriſt, but now I cannot live without him. How fearfull a thing will it be to die unreconciled to God under a Goſpel of Reconciliation! While the voice of the Goſpel of Grace is calling upon you, *Return and live*; *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* beware of dying unreconcil'd under ſuch a Goſpel.

When you return hence, retire into a corner, and conſider what a wicked enmity of mind you have had againſt God, and Chriſt; and pray that you may be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind, *Epheſ.* 4. 23. Let an holy Reſolution be taken up at laſt (after many neglects) as was by the poor diſtreſſed Prodigal, after he had long liv'd a wandring life, *Luk.* 15. 18. and onward, *I will ariſe, and go to my Father*, &c. and you will find God a merciſull Father, ready to receive you,

you, and with joy! Oh the joyfull meeting between a returning Soul, and a ſin-pardoning God! When once your ſtrangeneſs, and your enmity are overcome, and you are come into a ſtate of amity and friendſhip with God; then will the reſt of your time be pleaſantly ſpent in an holy, humble walking with God, under the conduct of Grace, till you come eternally to enjoy him in Glory.

FINIS.